

City's Edwards Aquifer Allocation Reduced

by Les McMahan, P.E.



The City of Alamo Heights, like other cities that use Edwards Aquifer water, has had its uninterruptible pumping allocation from the aquifer (senior rights) reduced by approximately 20% from 2,633.19 acre-feet to 2,016.504 acre-feet of water. The City would have an interruptible right (junior rights) to pump additional water only when the aquifer level is above 665 feet, mean sea level. This additional pumping comes at the cost of a significant premium above the basic cost of water per acre-foot, the basic cost having been raised from \$29.00/ac.-ft. in 2004 to \$38.00/ac.-ft. for 2005.



The allocation reduction brings the City's senior rights down to actual pumping levels in 2003, and another reduction in the allocation for all cities using Edwards Aquifer water is expected in 2008. Under the current limitations, once the aquifer level drops below the 665-foot level, the City would have to issue a mandatory water conservation alert in order to protect our senior rights allocation.

It is important for all residents to practice good water conservation habits on a voluntary basis all year long. Some of the biggest savings of water can be had in irrigation methods, such as minimizing the area of irrigated turf, maintaining irrigation systems to prevent water loss, rain sensors to prevent systems from coming on when not needed and zoned irrigation systems. Landscaping options should include xeriscapes, drought-tolerant grasses and plants, and adequate soil support for grasses.

